

**REMARKS**  
**OF**  
**MR. WEBSTER**  
**IN THE**  
**SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,**  
**MAY 9, 1828,**  
**ON THE TARIFF BILL.**

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## REMARKS.



Mr. President,

This subject is surrounded with embarrassments, on all sides. Of itself, however wisely or temperately treated, it is full of difficulties; and these difficulties have not been diminished by the particular frame of this Bill, nor by the manner, hitherto pursued, of proceeding with it. A diversity of interest exists, or is supposed to exist, in different parts of the country. This is one source of difficulty. Different opinions are entertained as to the constitutional power of Congress; this is another. And then, again, different members of the Senate have instructions, which they feel bound to obey, and which clash with one another. We have this morning seen an Honorable Member from New York, an important motion being under consideration, lay his instructions on the Table, and point to them, as his power of attorney, and as containing the directions for his vote.

Those who intend to oppose this Bill, under all circumstances, and in all or any forms, care not how ob-

jectionable it now is, or how bad it may be made. Others, finding their own leading objects satisfactorily secured by it, naturally enough press forward, without staying to consider, deliberately, how injuriously other interests may be affected. All these causes create embarrassments, and inspire just fears, that a wise and useful result is hardly to be expected. There seems a strange disposition to run the hazard of extremes; and to forget, that in cases of this kind, measure, proportion, and degree are objects of inquiry, and the true rules of judgment. I have not had the slightest wish to discuss the measure; not believing that, in the present state of things, any good could be done by me, in that way. But the frequent declarations that this was altogether a New England measure, a bill for securing a monopoly to the capitalists of the North, and other expressions of a similar nature, have induced me to say a few words.

New England, Sir, has not been a leader, in this policy. On the contrary, she held back, herself, and tried to hold others back from it, from the adoption of the Constitution to 1824. Up to 1824, she was accused of sinister and selfish designs, *because she discountenanced the progress of this policy*. It was laid to her charge, then, that having established her manufactures herself, she wished that others should not have the power of rivalling her; and, for that reason, opposed all legislative encouragement. Under this angry denunciation against her, the act of 1824 passed. Now the imputation is precisely of an opposite character. The present measure is pronounced to be



exclusively for the benefit of New England ; to be brought forward by her agency, and designed to gratify the cupidity of her wealthy establishments.

Both charges, Sir, are equally without the slightest foundation. The opinion of New England, up to 1824, was founded in the conviction, that, on the whole, it was wisest and best, both for herself and others, that manufactures should make haste slowly. She felt a reluctance to trust great interests on the foundation of Government patronage ; for who could tell how long such patronage would last, or with what steadiness, skill, or perseverance it would continue to be granted ? It is now nearly fifteen years, since, among the first things which I ever ventured to say here, was the expression of a serious doubt, whether this Government was fitted by its construction, to administer aid and protection to particular pursuits ; whether, having called such pursuits into being by indications of its favor, it would not, afterwards desert them, when troubles come upon them, and leave them to their fate. Whether this prediction, the result, certainly, of chance, and not of sagacity, will so soon be fulfilled, remains to be seen.

At the same time it is true, that from the very first commencement of the Government, those who have administered its concerns have held a tone of encouragement and invitation towards those who should embark in manufactures. All the Presidents, I believe, without exception, have concurred, in this general sentiment ; and the very first act of Congress, laying duties of import, adopted the then unusual expedient of

a preamble, apparently for little other purpose than that of declaring, that the duties, which it imposed, were imposed for the encouragement and protection of manufactures. When, at the commencement of the late war, duties were doubled, we were told that we should find a mitigation of the weight of taxation, in the new aid and succour which would be thus afforded to our own manufacturing labour. Like arguments were urged, and prevailed, but not by the aid of New England votes, when the Tariff was afterwards arranged, at the close of the war, in 1816. Finally, after a whole winter's deliberation, the act of 1824, received the sanction of both Houses of Congress, and settled the policy of the country. What, then, was New England to do? She was fitted for manufacturing operations, by the amount and character of her population, by her capital, by the vigor and energy of her free labor, by the skill, economy, enterprise, and perseverance of her people. I repeat, what was she, under these circumstances, to do? A great and prosperous rival in her near neighborhood, threatening to draw from her a part, perhaps a great part, of her foreign commerce: was she to use, or to neglect, those other means of seeking her own prosperity which belonged to her character and her condition? Was she to hold out, forever, against the course of the Government, and see herself losing, on one side, and yet make no effort to sustain herself on the other? No, Sir. Nothing was left to New England, after the act of 1824, but to conform herself to the will of others. Nothing was left to her, but to consider that the Go-

vernment had fixed and determined its own policy ; and that policy was *protection*.

New-England, poor, in some respects, in others, is as wealthy as her neighbors. Her soil would be held in low estimation, by those who are acquainted with the valley of the Mississippi, and some of the meadows of the South. But in industry, in habits of labor, skill, and in accumulated capital, the fruit of two centuries of industry, she may be said to be rich. After this final declaration—this solemn promulgation of the policy of the Government, I again ask, what was she to do ? Was she to deny herself the use of her advantages, natural and acquired ? Was she to content herself with useless regrets ? Was she longer to resist, what she could no longer prevent ? Or, was she, rather to adapt her acts to her condition ; and seeing the policy of the Government thus settled and fixed, to accommodate to it, as well as she could, her own pursuits, and her own industry ? Every man will see that she had no option. Every man will confess that there remained for her but one course. She not only saw this herself, but had, all along, foreseen that if the system of protecting manufactures should be adopted, she must go largely into them. I believe, Sir, almost every man from New-England who voted against the law of 1824, declared, that if, notwithstanding his opposition to that law, it should still pass, there would be no alternative but to consider the course and policy of the Government as then settled and fixed, and to act accordingly. The law did pass ; and a vast increase of investment in manufacturing establishments was



the consequence. Those who made such investments, probably entertained not the slightest doubt that as much as was promised would be effectually granted ; and that if, owing to any unforeseen occurrence, or untoward event, the benefit designed by the law, to any branch of manufactures, should not be realized, it would furnish a fair case for the consideration of Government. Certainly, they could not expect, after what had passed, that interests of great magnitude would be left at the mercy of the very first change of circumstances which might occur.

As a general remark, it may be said, that the interests concerned in the act of 1824, did not complain of their condition under it, excepting only those connected with the woollen manufactures. These did complain ; not so much of the act itself, as of a new state of circumstances, unforeseen when the law passed, but which had now arisen to thwart its beneficial operations, as to them ; although in one respect, perhaps the law itself was thought to be unwisely framed.

Three causes have been generally stated, as having produced the disappointment experienced by the manufacturers of wool, under the law of 1824.

First, it is alleged, that the price of the raw material had been raised too high, by the act itself. This point had been discussed at the time, and although opinions varied, the result, so far as it depended on this part of the case, though it may be said to have been unexpected, was certainly not entirely unforeseen.\*

\* Extract from Mr Webster's Speech, on the Tariff of 1824.—“ This Bill proposes, also, a very high duty upon imported wool ; and as far as I can learn, a majority of the manufacturers are at least extremely doubtful whether, taking these two provisions together, the state of the law is not better for them now than it would be if this should pass.”



But, secondly, the manufacturers imputed their disappointment to a reduction of the price of wool in England, which took place just about the date of the law of 1824. This reduction was produced by lowering the duty on imported wool from sixpence sterling to one penny sterling per pound. The effect of this is obvious enough ; but in order to see the real extent of the reduction, it may be convenient to state the matter more particularly.

The meaning of our law was doubtless to give the American manufacturer an *advantage* over his English competitors. *Protection* must mean this, or it means nothing. The English manufacturer having certain advantages, on his side, such as the lower price of labor, and the lower interest of money, the object of our law was to counteract these advantages, by creating others, in behalf of the American manufacturer. Therefore, to see what was necessary to be done, in order that the American manufacturer might sustain the competition, a relative view of the respective advantages and disadvantages was to be taken. In this view the very first element to be considered was, what is to each party the cost of the raw material. On this, the whole must materially depend. Now when the law of 1824 passed, the English manufacturer paid a duty of sixpence sterling on imported wool. But in a very few days afterwards, this duty was reduced by parliament, from sixpence to a penny. A reduction of five pence per pound, in the price of wool, was estimated in Parliament to be equal to a reduction of twenty six per cent, *ad valorem*, on all imported wool ; and this reduction,

it is obvious, had its effect on the price of home-produced wool also. Almost, then, at the very moment, that the framers of the act of 1824, were raising the price of the raw material here, as that act did raise it, it was lowered in England, by the very great reduction of *twenty-six per cent.* Of course, this changed the whole basis of the calculation. It wrought a complete change in the relative advantages and disadvantages of the English and American competitors ; and threw the preponderance of advantage, most decidedly, on the side of the English. If the American manufacturer had not vastly too great a preference, before this reduction took place, it is clear he had too little afterwards.

In a paper which has been presented to the Senate, and often referred to ; a paper distinguished for the ability and clearness with which it enforces general principles—the Boston Report,—it is clearly proved, (what indeed is sufficiently obvious from the mere comparison of dates) that the British Government did not reduce its duty on wool *because* of our act of 1824. Certainly this is true ; but the effect of that reduction, on our manufactures, was the same precisely as if the British act had been designed to operate against them, and for no other purpose. I think it cannot be doubted that our law of 1824, and the reduction of the wool duty in England, taken together, left our manufactures in a worse condition than they were before. If there was any reasonable ground, therefore, for passing the law of 1824, there is now the same ground for some other measure ; and this ground too, is reinforced by the consideration of the hopes excited, the

enterprizes undertaken, and the capital invested, in consequence of that law.

So much, Sir, for this cause of disappointment.

In the last place, it was alleged by the manufacturers, that they suffered from the mode of collecting the duties on woollen fabrics at the Custom Houses. These duties are *ad valorem* duties. Such duties, from the commencement of the Government, have been estimated by reference to the invoice, as fixing the value at the place whence imported. When not suspected to be false or fraudulent, the *Invoice* is the regular proof of value. Originally this was a tolerably safe mode of proceeding. While the importation was mainly in the hands of American merchants, the *Invoice*, would of course, if not false or fraudulent, express the terms and the price of an actual purchase and sale. But an *Invoice* is not necessarily, an instrument expressing the sale of goods and their prices. If there be but a list, or catalogue, with prices stated by way of estimate, it is still an *Invoice*, and within the law. Now the suggestion is, that the English manufacturer, in making out an invoice, in which prices are thus stated by himself, in the way of estimate merely, is able to obtain an important advantage over the American merchant who *purchases* in the same market, and whose Invoice states, consequently, the actual prices, on the sale. And in proof of this suggestion it is alleged, that in the largest importing city in the Union, a very great proportion, some say nearly all, of the woollen fabricks are imported on foreign accounts. The various papers which have come before us, praying

for a tax on auction sales, aver that the invoice of the foreign importer is generally decidedly lower than that of the American importer ; and that, in consequence of this and of the practice of sales at auction, the American merchant must be driven out of the trade. I cannot answer for the entire accuracy of these statements, but I have no doubt there is something of truth in them. The main facts have been often stated, and I have neither seen nor heard a denial of them.

Is it true, then, that nearly the whole importation of woollens is, in the largest importing city, in the hands of foreigners ? Is it true, as stated, that the invoices of such foreign importers are, generally, found to be lower than those of the American importer ? If these things be so, it will be admitted that there is reason to believe that undervaluations do take place ; and that some corrective for the evil should be administered. I am glad to see that the American merchants themselves, begin to bestow attention to a subject, as interesting to them as it is to the manufacturers.

Under this state of things, Sir, the law of the last session was proposed. It was confined, as I thought properly, to wool and woollens. It took up the great and leading subject of complaint, and nothing else. It was urged indeed, against that Bill, that although much had been said of frauds at the Custom House, no provision was made in it for the prevention of such frauds. That is a mistake. The general frame of the Bill was such, that, if skilfully drawn and adapted to its purpose, its tendency to prevent such frauds would be manifest. By the fixing of prices at successive points



of graduation, or *minimums*, as they are called, the power of evading duties by undervaluations would be most materially restrained. If these points, indeed, were sufficiently distant, it is obvious the duty would assume something of the certainty and precision of a specific duty. But this Bill failed, and Congress adjourned, in March last year, leaving the subject where it had found it.

The complaints, which had given rise to the Bill, continued ; and in the course of the summer, a meeting of the wool-growers and wool-manufacturers assembled in Pennsylvania, and agreed on a petition to Congress. I do not feel it necessary, on behalf of the citizens of Massachusetts, to disclaim a participation in that meeting. Persons of much worth and respectability attended it from Massachusetts, and its proceedings and results manifested, I think, a degree of temper and moderation, highly creditable to those who composed it.

But while the Bill of last year was confined to that which alone had been a subject of complaint, the bill now before us is of a very different description. It proposes to raise duties on various other articles, besides wool and woollens. It contains some provisions which bear, with unnecessary severity, on the whole community ; others which affect, with peculiar hardship, particular interests ; while both of them benefit nobody and nothing but the Treasury. It contains provisions, which, with whatever motive put into it, it is confessed are now kept in, for the very purpose of destroying the bill altogether ; or, with the intent to

compel those who expect to derive benefit, to feel smart from it also. Probably such a motive of action has not often been avowed.

The wool manufacturers think they have made out a case, for the interposition of Congress. They happen to live, principally, at the north and east; and, in a bill, professing to be for their relief, other provisions are found, which are supposed, (and supported, *because* they are supposed,) to be such as will press, with peculiar hardship, on that quarter of the country. Sir, what can be expected, but evil, when a temper like this prevails? How can such a hostile, retaliatory legislation be reconciled to common justice, or common prudence? Nay, sir, this rule of action seems carried still farther. Not only are clauses found, and continued in the bill, which oppress particular interests, but taxes are laid, also, which will be severely felt by the whole union; and this too with the same design, and for the same end before mentioned, of causing the smart of the bill to be felt. Of this description is the molasses tax; a tax, in my opinion, absurd and preposterous, in relation to any object of protection; needlessly oppressive to the whole community; and benefitting nobody on earth, but the treasury. And yet, here it is, and here it is kept, under an idea, conceived in ignorance, and cherished for a short lived triumph, that New-England will be deterred, by this tax, from protecting her extensive woollen manufactures; or, if not, that the authors of this policy may at least have the pleasure, the high pleasure, of perceiving that she feels the effects of this bill.

Sir, let us look, for a moment, at this tax. The molasses imported into the United States amounts to THIRTEEN millions annually. Of this quantity, not more than THREE millions are distilled; the remaining TEN millions being consumed, as an article of wholesome food. The proposed tax is not to be laid for revenue. That is not pretended. It was not introduced for the benefit of the sugar planters. They are contented with their present condition, and have applied for nothing. What, then, was the object? Sir, the original professed object, was, to increase, by this new duty on molasses, the consumption of spirits distilled from grain. This, I say, was the object originally professed. But in this point of view, the measure appears to me to be preposterous. It is monstrous, and out of all proportion and relation of means to ends. It proposes to double the duty, on the TEN millions of gallons of molasses, which are consumed for food, in order that it may likewise double the duty on the THREE millions which are distilled into spirits; and all this, for the contingent and doubtful purpose of augmenting the consumption of spirits distilled from grain. I say contingent and doubtful purpose; because I do not believe any such effect will be produced. I do not think a hundred gallons more of spirits distilled from grain will find a market in consequence of this tax on molasses. The debate, here and elsewhere, has shown that, I think clearly. But suppose some slight effect of that kind should be produced; is it so desirable an object, as that it should be sought by such means? Shall we tax food, to encourage intemperance? Shall

we raise the price of a wholesome article of sustenance, of daily consumption, especially among the poorer classes, in order that we may enjoy a mere chance of causing these same classes to use more of our home-made ardent spirits?

Sir, the bare statement of this question puts it beyond the reach of all argument. No man will seriously undertake the defence of such a tax. It is better, much more candid, certainly, to admit, as has been admitted, that obnoxious as it is, and abominable as it is, it is kept in the bill with a special view to its effects on New England votes, and New England interests.

The bill also takes away all the drawback, allowed by existing laws, on the exportation of spirits distilled from molasses; and this, it is supposed, and truly supposed, will affect New England. It will considerably affect her; for the exportation of such spirits is a part of her trade, and though not great in amount, it is a part which mingles usefully, with the exportation of other articles, assists to make out variety of cargo, and finds a market in the North of Europe, the Mediterranean, and in South America. This exportation the bill proposes entirely to destroy.

The increased duty on molasses, while it thus needlessly and wantonly enhances the price to the consumer, may affect also, in a greater or less degree, the importation of that article; and be thus injurious to the commerce of the country. The importation of molasses, in exchange for lumber, provisions, and other articles of our own production, is one of the largest portions of our West India trade; a trade, it may be added,



though of small profit, yet of short voyages, suited to small capitals, employing many hands, and much navigation ; and the earliest and oldest branch of our foreign commerce. That portion of this trade which we now enjoy is conducted on the freest and most liberal principles. The exports which sustain it are from the East, the South and the West ; every part of the country having, thus, an interest in its continuance and extension. A market for these exports, to any of these portions of the country, is infinitely of more importance to it than all the benefit to be expected from the supposed increased consumption of spirits distilled from grain.

Yet, sir, this tax is to be kept in the bill, that New England may be made *to feel*. Gentlemen who hold it to be wholly unconstitutional to lay any tax, whatever, for the purposes intended by this bill, yet cordially vote for this tax. An honorable gentleman from Maryland, (Mr. Smith) calls the whole bill a “bill of abominations.” This tax, he agrees, is one of its abominations, yet he votes for it. Both the gentlemen from North Carolina have signified their dissatisfaction with the bill, yet they have both voted to double the tax on molasses. Sir, do gentlemen flatter themselves that this course of policy can answer their purposes ? Do they not perceive, that such a mode of proceeding, with a view to such avowed objects, must waken a spirit, that shall treat taunt with scorn, and bid menace defiance ? Do they not know, if they do not, it is time they did, that a policy like this, avowed with such self satisfaction, persisted in with a delight which should

only accompany the discovery of some new and wonderful improvement in legislation, will compel every New England man to feel that he is degraded and debased, if he does not resist it ?

Sir, Gentlemen mistake us. They greatly mistake us. To those who propose to conduct the affairs of Government, and to enact laws on such principles as these, and for such objects as these, New England, be assured, will exhibit, not submission, but resistance ; not humiliation, but disdain. Against her, depend on it, nothing will be gained by intimidation. If you propose to suffer, yourselves, in order that she may be made to suffer also, she will bid you come on—she will meet challenge, with challenge ; she will invite you to do your worst, and your best, and to see who will hold out longest. She has offered you every one of her votes in the Senate to strike out this tax on molasses. You have refused to join her, and to strike it out. With the aid of the votes of any one southern state, for example of North Carolina, it could have been struck out. But North Carolina has refused her votes for this purpose. She has voted to keep the tax in, and to keep it in at the highest rate. And yet, sir, North Carolina, whatever she may think of it, is fully as much interested in this tax as Massachusetts. I think, indeed, she is more interested, and that she will feel it more heavily and sorely. She is herself a great consumer of the article, throughout all her classes of population. This increase of the duty will levy on her citizens a new tax of fifty thousand dollars a year, or more ; although her Representatives on this floor have so often told us that her people are now poor, and al-

ready borne down with taxes. North Carolina will feel this tax also in her trade, for what of foreign commerce has she, more useful to her than the West India market for her provisions and lumber? And yet the gentlemen from North Carolina insist on keeping this tax in the bill. Let them not, then, complain. Let them not hereafter, call it the work of others. It is their own work. Let them not lay it to the manufacturers. The manufacturers have had nothing to do with it. Let them not lay it to the wool-growers. The wool-growers have had nothing to do with it. Let them not lay it to New England. New England has done nothing but to oppose it, and to ask them to oppose it also. No, sir; let them take it to themselves. Let them enjoy the fruit of their own doings. Let them assign their motives, for thus taxing their own constituents, and abide their judgment; but do not let them flatter themselves that New England cannot pay a molasses tax as long as North Carolina chooses that such a tax shall be paid.

Sir, I am sure there is nobody here, envious of the prosperity of New England, or who would wish to see it destroyed. But if there be such any where, I cannot cheer them by holding out the hope of a speedy accomplishment of their wishes. The prosperity of New England, like that of other parts of the country, may, doubtless, be affected injuriously by unwise or unjust laws. It may be impaired, especially, by an unsteady and shifting policy, which fosters particular objects to-day, and abandons them to-morrow. She may advance faster, or slower; but

the propelling principle, be assured, is in her, deep fixed, and active. Her course is onward and forward. The great powers of free labor, of moral habits, of general education, of good institutions, of skill, enterprise, and perseverance are all working with her, and for her ; and on the small surface which her population covers, she is destined, I think, to exhibit striking results of the operation of these potent causes, in whatever constitutes the happiness, or belongs to the ornament of human society.

Mr. President, this tax on molasses will benefit the Treasury, though it will benefit nobody else. Our finances will, at least, be improved by it. I assure the gentlemen, we will endeavor to use the funds thus to be raised properly and wisely, and to the public advantage. We have already passed a bill for the Delaware breakwater ; another is before us, for the improvement of several of our harbors ; the Chesapeake and Ohio canal bill has been brought into the Senate, while I have been speaking ; and next session we hope to bring forward the breakwater at Nantucket. These appropriations, sir, will require pretty ample means ; it will be convenient to have a well supplied Treasury, and I state for the especial consolation of the Honorable Gentlemen from North Carolina, that so long as they choose to compel their constituents, and my constituents, to pay a molasses tax, the proceeds thereof shall be appropriated, as far as I am concerned, to valuable national objects, in useful and necessary works of internal improvements.



Mr. President, in what I have now said, I have but followed where others have led, and compelled me to follow. I have but exhibited to gentlemen the necessary consequences of their own course of proceeding. But this manner of passing laws is wholly against my own judgment, and repugnant to all my feelings. And I would, even now, once more solicit gentlemen to consider, whether a different course would not be more worthy of the Senate, and more useful to the country. Why should we not act upon this bill, article by article, judge fairly of each, retain what a majority approves, and reject the rest? If it be, as the gentleman from Maryland called it, "a bill of abominations," why not strike out as many of the abominations as we can? Extreme measures cannot tend to good. They must produce mischief. If a proper and moderate bill, in regard to wool and woollens had passed last year, we should not now be in our present situation. If such a bill, extended perhaps to a few other articles, if necessity so required, had been prepared and recommended at this session, much, both of excitement and of evil, would have been avoided.

Nevertheless, sir, it is for gentlemen to judge for themselves. If when the wool manufacturers, think they have a fair right to call on Congress to carry into effect what was intended for them by the law of 1824, and when there is manifested some disposition to comply with what they thus request, the

benefit cannot be granted, nevertheless, in any other manner than by inserting it in a sort of bill of pains and penalties—a “bill of abominations,” it is not for me to attempt to reason down, what has not been reasoned up; but I must content myself with admonishing gentlemen that their policy is destined, in all probability, to terminate in their own sore disappointment.

I advert once more, sir, to the subject of wool and woollens, for the purpose of showing, that, even in respect to that part of the bill, the interest mainly protected is not that of the manufacturers. On the contrary, it is that of the wool-growers. The wool-grower is vastly more benefited than the manufacturer. The interest of the manufacturer is treated as secondary, and subordinate, throughout the bill. Just so much, and no more, is done for him, as is supposed necessary to enable him to purchase and manufacture the wool. The agricultural interest, the farming interest, the interest of the sheep-owner, is the great object which the bill is calculated to benefit, and which it will benefit, if the manufacturer can be kept alive. A comparison of existing duties with those proposed on the wool, and on the cloth, will show how this part of the case stands.

At present, a duty of thirty per cent. *ad valorem* is laid on all wool, costing ten cents per pound, or upwards; and a duty of fifteen per cent. on all wool under that price.

The present bill proposes a specific duty of four

cents per pound, and also an *ad valorem* duty of fifty per cent on all wool of every description.

The result of the combination of these two duties, is, that wool, fit for making good cloths, and costing from thirty to forty cents per pound, in the foreign market, will pay a duty, at least, equal to *sixty per cent. ad valorem*. And wool costing less than ten cents in the foreign market, will pay a duty, on the average, of a *hundred per cent. ad valorem*.

Now, sir, these heavy duties are laid for the wool-grower. They are designed to give a spring to agriculture, by fostering one of its most important products.

But let us see what is done for the manufacturer, in order to enable him to manufacture the raw material, at prices so much enhanced.

As the bill passed the House of Representatives, the advance of duties, on cloths, is supposed to have been not more than three per cent. on the minimum points. Taking the amount of duty to be now thirty seven per cent. *ad valorem*, on cloths, this bill, as it came to us, proposed, if that supposition be true, only to carry it up to forty. Amendments, here adopted, have enhanced this duty, and are understood to have carried it up to a duty of forty-five, or perhaps fifty per cent. *ad valorem*. Taking it at the highest, the duty on the cloth is raised *thirteen* per cent.; while that on wool is raised, in some instances *thirty*, and in some instances *eighty-five* per cent.; that is, in one case from

thirty to sixty, and in the other from fifteen to a hundred. Now the calculation is said to be true, which supposes, that a duty of thirty per cent. on the raw material, enhances, by fifteen per cent. the cost of producing the cloth ; the raw material being estimated, generally, to be equal to half the expense of the fabric. So that, while, by this bill, the manufacturer gains *thirteen* per cent. on the cloth, he would appear to lose *fifteen* per cent. on the same cloth, by the increase in the price of the wool. And this not only would appear to be true, but would, I suppose, be actually true, were it not that the market may be open to the manufacturer, under this bill, for such cloths, as may be furnished at prices, intermediate between the graduated prices, established by the bill.

For example ; few or no foreign cloths, it is supposed, costing more than fifty cents a yard, and less than a dollar, will be imported ; therefore, American cloths, worth more than fifty cents, and less than a dollar, will find a market. So of the intervals, or intermediate spaces, between the other statute prices. In this mode, it may be hoped, that the manufacturers may be sustained, and rendered able to carry on the work of converting the raw material, the agricultural product of the country, into an article necessary and fit for use. And this statement, I think, sufficiently shows, that no farther benefit or advantage is intended for them, than such as shall barely enable them to



accomplish that purpose ; and that the object, to which all others have been made to yield, is the advantage of agriculture.

And yet, sir, it is on occasion of a bill thus framed, that a loud and ceaseless cry has been raised against what is called the cupidity, the avarice, the monopolizing spirit of New England manufacturers ! This is one of the main “abominations of the bill ;” to remedy which it is proposed to keep in the other abominations. Under the prospect of advantage held out by the law of 1824, men have ventured their fortunes, and their means of subsistence, for themselves and families, in woollen manufactures. They have ventured investments in objects requiring a large out-lay of capital ; in mills, houses, water-works and expensive machinery. Events have occurred, blighting their prospects, and withering their hopes. Events, which have deprived them of that degree of succour, which the Legislature manifestly intended. They come here asking for relief, against an unforeseen occurrence ; for remedy against that, which Congress, if it had foreseen, would have prevented. And they are told, that what they ask is an abomination ! They say that an interest important to them, and important to the country, and principally called into existence, by the Government itself, has received a severe shock, under which it must sink, if the Government will not, by reasonable means, endeavor to preserve what it has created. And

they are met with a volley of hard names, a tirade of reproaches, and a loud cry against capitalists, speculators and stock-jobbers! For one, I think them hardly treated; I think, and from the beginning have thought, their claim to be a fair one. With how much soever of undue haste, or even of credulity, they may be thought to have embarked in these pursuits, under the hopes held out by Government, I do not feel it to be just, that they should be abandoned to their fate on the first adverse change of circumstances; although I have always seen, and now see, how difficult, perhaps, I should rather say how impossible, it is, for Congress to act, when such changes occur, in a manner at once efficient, but discreet; prompt, but yet moderate.

For these general reasons, and on these grounds, I am decidedly in favor of a measure which shall uphold and support, in behalf of the manufacturers, the law of 1824, and carry its benefits and advantages to the full extent intended. And though I am not altogether satisfied with the particular form of these enactments, I am willing to take them, in the belief that they will answer an essentially important and necessary purpose.

It is now my painful duty to take notice of another part of the bill, which I think in the highest degree objectionable and unreasonable; I mean the extraordinary augmentation of the duty on hemp. I cannot well conceive any thing more unwise or ill-judged than this appears to me to be.

The duty is already thirty-five dollars per ton ; and the bill proposes a progressive increase, till it shall reach sixty dollars. This will be absolutely oppressive on the shipping interest, the great consumers of the article. When this duty shall have reached its maximum, it will create an annual charge of at least one hundred thousand dollars, falling not on the aggregate of the commercial interest, but on the ship owner. It is a very unequal burden. The navigation of the country has already a hard struggle, to sustain itself against foreign competition ; and it is singular enough, that this interest, which is already so severely tried, which pays so much in duties, on hemp, duck, and iron, and which it is now proposed to put under new burdens, is the only interest, which is subject to a direct tax, by a law of Congress. The tonnage duty is such a tax. If this bill should pass in its present form, I shall think it my duty, at the earliest suitable opportunity, to bring forward a bill for the repeal of the tonnage duty. It amounts, I think, to a hundred and twenty thousand dollars a year ; and its removal will be due, in all justice, to the ship owner, if he is to be made subject to a new taxation on hemp and iron.

But, objectionable as this tax is, from its severe pressure on a particular interest, and that at present a depressed interest, there are still farther grounds of dissatisfaction with it. It is not calculated to effect the object intended by it. If that object be the increase of the sale of the dew rotted

American hemp, the increased duty will have little tendency to produce that result ; because, such hemp is so much lower, in price, than imported hemp, that it must be already used for such purposes as it is fit for. It is said to be selling for one hundred and twenty dollars per ton ; while the imported hemp commands two hundred and seventy dollars. The proposed duty, therefore, cannot materially assist the sale of American hemp of this quality and description.

But the main reason, given for the increase, is the encouragement of American water-rotted hemp. Doubtless this is an important object ; but I have seen nothing to satisfy me that it can be obtained, by means like this. At present, there is produced in the country no considerable quantity of water-rotted hemp. It is problematical, at best, whether it can be produced under any encouragement. The hemp may be grown, doubtless, in various parts of the United States, as well as in any country in the world ; but the process of preparing it for use, by water-rotting, I believe to be more difficult and laborious than is generally thought among us. I incline to think, that, happily for us, labor is in too much demand, and commands too high prices, to allow this process to be carried on profitably. Other objections, also, beside the amount of labor required, may, perhaps, be found to exist, in climate, and in the effects liable to be produced on health, in warm countries, by the nature of the process. But whether there be foundation for these



suggestions, or not, the fact still is, that we do not produce the article. It cannot, at present, be had at any price. To augment the duty, therefore, on foreign hemp, can only have the effect of compelling the consumer to pay so much more money into the Treasury. The proposed increase, then, is doubly objectionable; first, because it creates a charge, not to be borne equally by the whole country, but a new and heavy charge, to be borne exclusively by one particular interest; and, second, because, that of the money raised by this charge, little or none goes to accomplish the professed object, by aiding the hemp grower; but the whole, or nearly the whole, falls into the Treasury. Thus the effect will be in no way proportioned to the cause, nor the advantage obtained by some, at all equal to the hardship imposed on others. While one interest will suffer much, the other interest will gain little or nothing.

I am quite willing to make a thorough and fair experiment, on the subject of water-rotted hemp; but I wish, at the same time, to do this in a manner that shall not oppress individuals, or particular classes. I intend, therefore, to move an amendment, which will consist in striking out so much of the present bill as raises the duty on hemp, higher than it is at present, and in inserting a clause, making it the duty of the Navy Department to purchase, for the public service, American water-rotted hemp, whenever it can be had, of a suitable quality; provided it can be purchased at a rate not

exceeding, by more than twenty per cent. the current price of imported hemp, of the same quality. If this amendment should be adopted, the ship owner would have no reason to complain, as the price of the article would not be enhanced, to him; and at the same time, the hemp grower, who shall try the experiment, will be made sure of a certain market, and a high price. The existing duty of thirty-five dollars per ton will remain to be still borne by the ship-owner. The twenty per cent. advance, on the price of imported hemp will be equal to fifty dollars per ton; the aggregate will be eighty-five dollars; and this, it must be admitted, is a liberal and effective provision, and will secure everything which can be reasonably desired, by the hemp-grower, in the most ample manner.

But, if the bill should become a law, and go into operation in its present shape, this duty on hemp is likely to defeat its own object in another way. Very intelligent persons entertain the opinion, that the consequence of this high duty will be such, that American vessels, engaged in foreign commerce, will, to a great extent, supply themselves with cordage abroad. This, of course, will diminish the consumption at home, and thus injure the hemp-grower, and at the same time, the manufacturer of cordage. Again; there may be reason to fear, that as the duty is not raised on cordage manufactured abroad, such cordage may be imported, in greater or less degree, in the place of the unmanufactured article. Whatever view we take, therefore, of this

hemp duty, it appears to me altogether objectionable.

Much has been said of the protection which the navigation of the country has received, from the discriminating duties on tonnage, and the exclusive enjoyment of the coasting trade. In my opinion, neither of these measures has materially sustained the shipping interest of the United States. I do not concur in the sentiments, on that point, quoted from Dr. Seybert's statistical work. Dr. Seybert was an intelligent and worthy man, and compiled a valuable book; but he was engaged in public life at a time, when it was more fashionable than it has since become, to ascribe efficacy to discriminating duties. The shipping interest in this country has made its way by its own enterprise. By its own vigorous exertion, it spread itself over the seas, and by the same exertion, it still holds its place there. It seems idle to talk of the benefit and advantage of discriminating duties, when they operate against us, on one side of the ocean, quite as much as they operate for us on the other. To suppose that two nations, having intercourse with each other, can secure, each to itself, a decided advantage in that intercourse, is little less than absurdity; and this is the absurdity of discriminating duties. Still less reason is there for the idea, that our own ship-owners hold the exclusive enjoyment of the coasting trade, only by virtue of the law, which secures it to their exclusive employment. Look at the rate of freights. Look at the manner in which



this coasting trade is conducted, by our own vessels, and the competition which subsists between them. In a majority of instances, probably, these vessels are owned, in whole or in part, by those who navigate them. These owners are at home, at one end of the voyage; and repairs and supplies are thus obtained in the cheapest and most economical manner. No foreign vessels would be able to partake in this trade, even by the aid of preferences and bounties.

The shipping interest of this country requires only an open field, and a fair chance. Every thing else it will do for itself. But, it has not a fair chance, while it is so severely taxed, in whatever enters into the necessary expense of building and equipment. In this respect, its rivals have advantages which may in the end, prove to be decisive against us. I entreat the Senate to examine and weigh this subject, and not go on, blindly, to unknown consequences. The English ship-owner is carefully regarded by his government, and aided and succoured, whenever and wherever necessary, by a sharp-sighted policy. Both he and the American ship-owner obtain their hemp from Russia. But observe the difference. The duty on hemp in England is but twenty-one dollars; here, it is proposed to make it sixty; notwithstanding its cost here is necessarily enhanced by an additional freight, proportioned to a voyage, longer than that which brings it to the English consumer, by the whole breadth of the Atlantic. Sir, I wish to invoke the Senate's attention, earnestly, to this subject; I would awaken the regard of the whole government, more and more, not only on this but on all occasions, to this great national interest; an interest, which lies at the very foundation, both of our commercial prosperity and our naval achievement.